

Session 5: Middle Voice Teaching Points & Integration Guide

Three new teaching slides have been inserted into Session 5: *Me, the Co-Author & Protagonist of My Story*

- Slide 5.5: **The Grammar of Both**
- Slide 13.5: **The Writing Transforms You**
- Slide 14.5: **Heard Into Becoming**

These slides explain the linguistic and theological principle of the middle voice, showing how men are simultaneously agents and subjects being acted upon throughout the session. The deck now contains **23 slides total** (was 20).

SLIDE 5.5: THE GRAMMAR OF BOTH

Position: Immediately after Slide 5 (Protagonist and Co-Author)

Visual: Three boxes showing Active, Passive, and Middle voices

Teaching Duration: 5–6 minutes

FACILITATOR TALKING POINTS

Opening move: "Here's what's actually happening when you write your story, and when you're heard. We're going to use a very old grammar to explain a very new experience you're about to have.

In ancient Greek, there were three voices. And they tell us something profound about what happens in this room.

Active voice: *I do the thing.* I write it. I choose it. I'm the author. Your forty years of agency live here — and we honor that. You made choices. You built things. You endured. That's real.

Passive voice: *The thing is done to me.* God is doing it. You're receiving. You're not in control; you're being shaped. And that's also true — God has been authoring your story all along, weaving your choices and your wounds into a plot larger than any single chapter.

But here's the thing: Most men in retirement get stuck between those two. Either 'I did it all, and now I'm nobody' or 'I was just a passenger, and I have no say.' Neither one is whole.

Then there's the middle voice. This is the one the Greek language had that we don't have in English — so we have to think about it sideways. *I do the thing for myself — and in that act, I am transformed by it.* The boundary between subject and object blurs. I'm the writer and the written. I'm the speaker and being spoken into being.

Here's what that means for tonight:

When you write your story — really write it, not just think it — you're not just recording something that happened. You're authoring yourself. The man who maps his chapters and writes them down is not the same man who hands you a pen.

When your witness listens and reads back what he heard, you're not just being told you're important. You're being called into being. 'What I heard was...' — and in that moment, you recognize yourself in his words. He saw you. And in being seen, you become more fully who you are.

That's middle voice.

It's not 'God does everything and I do nothing.' It's not 'I do everything.' It's *I am doing this, and in doing it, I am being done unto. God is acting through my writing, through your witness's ears, through the story I tell.*

The Charter we're building? Same thing. You're writing it — your choices, your wisdom, your values on the page. But you're also writing *into* who God has already made you to be. You're discovering what was already woven through your life.

All of this that we're about to do — the mapping, the writing, the witnessing — it's all middle voice. You're both the agent and the one being transformed. And that's not a contradiction. That's how the second half actually works."

PARTICIPANT GUIDE UPDATE

Add this context box before Slide 5.5 teaching moment:

Two truths that seem like opposites — but there's a grammar that holds them together

You are both the protagonist (the one living your story) and the co-author (discovered in God's story). Tonight's work shows you how these are one truth, not two contradictions. There's an ancient way of speaking about this called the middle voice — when you're both the one doing something AND the one being changed by it.

FACILITATOR GUIDE UPDATE

Add new section after Slide 5 notes:

SLIDE 5.5: THE GRAMMAR OF BOTH (5–6 min teaching)

Purpose: Reframe both agency and surrender as theologically coherent principles, not contradictions. Set up the entire evening's work (writing, witnessing, discovery) as an integrated practice where men are simultaneously authors and subjects.

What the middle voice does:

- Dissolves the false choice between "God does everything" and "I do everything"
- Makes agency and receptivity the same act, not competing forces
- Prepares men for the writing and witnessing work that follows
- Connects to Particularity: men are authoring *this particular* story with God present *in this particular* moment

Key phrases to anchor:

- "The boundary between subject and object blurs"
- "I'm the writer and the written"
- "In being seen, you become more fully who you are"
- "That's how the second half actually works"

Watch for:

- Men may feel relieved by this framing — it's often the permission they need to stop choosing between "all my responsibility" and "I'm a passenger"
- Some may not be familiar with Greek grammar; the metaphor matters more than linguistic precision. The principle is what counts.

If a man objects ("That sounds too abstract") or misunderstands: Use a concrete example: "When you speak your story aloud to a witness, you're not pretending he's passive — he's truly listening. But you're also not responsible for changing yourself on your own — his attention actually changes you. You're both acting and being acted upon. That's middle voice."

SLIDE 13.5: THE WRITING TRANSFORMS YOU

Position: Immediately after Slide 13 (Why We Write It Down)

Visual: Three-panel progression: Thinking → Writing → Recognizing

Teaching Duration: 4–5 minutes

FACILITATOR TALKING POINTS

Opening move: "I want to dig into why we ask you to *write* and not just think about this, or talk about it. Because there's real neuroscience here, and it's worth your time to understand what's happening when you put pen to paper.

Here's what Pennebaker found: He studied thousands of people. Some wrote about their trauma or their loss. Some talked about it in therapy. Some tried to just move on. The group that improved the most — with better immune function, fewer visits to the doctor, deeper resilience — were the ones whose writing *turned toward meaning*.

Not venting. Not rehashing. Not complaining. *Turning toward meaning*. Writing until they reached 'I now realize...' or 'The reason this mattered...' or 'Because of that, I became...'

Why does writing do this when thinking alone doesn't?

When you think about something, your mind loops. Round and round. Your brain goes down the same neural pathway over and over, and you end up exactly where you started — just more tired. But when you externalize that thinking onto the page, something shifts.

The fragments you've been holding in your head — the moments, the regrets, the pride, the wounds — they become *stable* on the page. They stop moving. And now you can look at them like an engineer looks at a system. *Oh. That's what I was actually doing. That's the pattern. That's what it made of me.*

That's middle voice. You're writing about yourself as if you're reading a map someone else drew. You're the explorer *and* you're standing above, seeing the whole route.

Here's the practical version:

This week, you're going to write for four days — one 20-minute sitting each day. You're going to feel a heaviness on Tuesday or Wednesday. That's normal. That's the moment the looping mind is trying to stay in control. Don't stop there.

By Day 4, when you read what you wrote and summarize it, something shifts. The dip lifts. You move from *feeling* the story to *understanding* it.

That shift — that's where the transformation happens. Not in the feeling. In the understanding.

And here's the beautiful part: You're not making up this understanding. You're *discovering* what was always there. The meaning doesn't come from nowhere. It emerges when you finally externalize the fragments and see them whole.

That's middle voice. You write. And the writing reveals what God has already woven through your life.

So this week: write every day. Write until you reach the insight words. Let the pen do what the thinking mind cannot."

PARTICIPANT GUIDE UPDATE

Add context box before the homework section (Slides 17–19):

The act of writing itself transforms you

Not the feeling. Not the talking about it later. The writing itself.

Why? The act of writing externalizes what the mind loops around endlessly. It makes the fragments stable. It moves you from *reliving* to *understanding*.

Expect the dip: If you feel stuck on Days 2–3, that's the sign you need to keep going. By Day 4, when you read what you wrote and summarize it, something shifts. The heaviness lifts. You move from feeling the story to understanding it.

Listen for these words — they signal the shift:

- Causal: *because* · *why* · *reason* · *cause*
- Insight: *realize* · *understand* · *know* · *meaning*

When these words appear, you've crossed from feeling to understanding. That's the signal you're on the right track.

FACILITATOR GUIDE UPDATE

Add new section after Slide 13 notes:

SLIDE 13.5: THE WRITING TRANSFORMS YOU (4–5 min teaching)

Purpose: Extend the Pennebaker research with the *mechanism* — explaining not just "writing helps" but *why and how*. Connect middle voice to the actual neuroscience of transformation.

What this slide does:

- Legitimizes the four-day homework structure (why not just sit once?)
- Explains the "heaviness dip" on Days 2–3 as normal and necessary, not a sign of failure
- Connects middle voice back to Pennebaker's research (not spiritual add-on; grounded in neuroscience)
- Prepares men for the experience they're about to have this week

Key phrases to anchor:

- "The pen does what the looping mind cannot"
- "Externalizing fragments onto the page builds the stable launching pad"
- "From reliving to understanding — that's where the transformation happens"
- "Write until you reach the insight words"

The four-day flow (reinforce here):

- **Days 1–2:** Heavy, might feel stuck. This is normal. The mind is externalizing. Expect a dip.
- **Day 3:** Keep going. Return to the valley. Write "I now realize," "the reason," "because."
- **Day 4:** Read back. Title the whole thing. Write the God sentence. The dip lifts. Understanding emerges.

If a man worries ("What if I don't find meaning?"): "You're not finding it — you're discovering it. It's already there. The writing reveals it. If by Day 4 the understanding hasn't surfaced yet, that's okay. You bring what you've written to the §1.1 draft next week. Sometimes the aha comes on the second pass, when you read it aloud to the group."

SLIDE 14.5: HEARD INTO BECOMING

Position: Immediately after Slide 14 (The Witness Pair)

Visual: Four-step numbered flow with gold circles

Teaching Duration: 5–6 minutes

FACILITATOR TALKING POINTS

Opening move: "What happens in the next fifteen minutes is going to feel vulnerable. One of you will tell your story — one chapter, one marker. And the other will just listen. No advice. No 'me too' story. No reassurance. Just listening.

And I want you to understand what's actually happening, because it's profound, and it's middle voice again.

Here's the neuroscience: When you speak something aloud that you've only thought about or written down privately, something shifts in your brain. The act of *vocalizing* it, of pushing it out of your mouth and into the room, awakens different neural networks than reading or thinking.

You have one experience. You write about it. You have one understanding. But when you say *it aloud to another person who is actually listening* — who is not waiting for his turn, not thinking about what he'll say next, just *receiving* — something new happens.

You hear yourself as if for the first time.

But that's only half of it. The second half is the Witness.

The Witness's job is to listen with absolute clarity. Not to interpret. Not to sympathize. Not to relate it to his own story. Just to receive what you're saying and reflect it back.

'What I heard was that you were shaped by...' or 'It sounds like the moment that changed everything was when...' Not fixing. Not explaining. Just mirroring.

And in that moment — when someone outside you confirms what you're saying — something shifts again.

This is the middle voice at its deepest.

You're the speaker. You're the protagonist of your story. But in speaking it to a real witness, you *become* more fully who you are. Your private story becomes shared. It becomes real in a way it wasn't before.

There's a biblical principle here, too. In John, Jesus is described as the Word — the one through whom all things were made and by whom all things hold together. And at the end of Scripture, in Revelation, God says 'I am making all things new.'

We often read that as God is *going* to make things new — future tense. But the Greek is present: God is *continually making* all things new. And one of the ways God does that in human relationships is *through witnessing*. Through someone outside you saying 'I see you. I hear you. Here's what I heard.'

In that moment, you're witnessed into becoming more fully yourself.

So tonight, both of you have real work to do.

Teller: Say it aloud. Don't hold back to be polite. Your witness is not here to agree; he's here to receive.

Witness: Listen like your life depends on it. Not thinking about what comes next. Not judging. Not offering. Just receiving. When he finishes, you tell him back what you heard.

And if this feels tender, let it. That tenderness is the sound of middle voice. You're not alone in your story anymore. You're being heard into becoming who you were already made to be."

PARTICIPANT GUIDE UPDATE

Add context box before Slide 14 (The Witness Pair):

What happens when you're heard

Being heard isn't the same as being advised. Your witness mirrors back what he hears — and in that moment, you recognize yourself more fully. This is middle voice too. You speak. You're heard. And in that moment, the private story becomes shared, real, witnessed — and it changes you.

FACILITATOR GUIDE UPDATE

Add new section after Slide 14 notes:

SLIDE 14.5: HEARD INTO BECOMING (5–6 min teaching)

Purpose: Lift the Witness Pair from "nice small-group exercise" to "sacramental practice" (in the secular sense: an outward sign of an inward transformation). Explain why the Witness doesn't give advice — he's not a coach; he's a mirror and a co-creator in the man's becoming.

What this slide does:

- Legitimizes the vulnerability men may feel
- Explains why "listening only" is deepest care, not coldness
- Connects to biblical witness theology (God making all things new through witnessing)
- Prepares men for the tenderness they may experience in the Witness Pair

Key phrases to anchor:

- "You hear yourself as if for the first time"
- "In being heard, you become more fully who you are"
- "The Witness mirrors — not fixes, not explains, just mirrors"
- "In that moment, you're witnessed into becoming who you were already made to be"

Watch for:

- Men may want to give advice or fix their partner's story. Remind them: "Your job tonight is to receive and mirror, not to solve."
- The room may feel tender or emotional. That's appropriate and not a sign something's wrong. Name it: "That tenderness is the sound of middle voice."
- Some men may feel self-conscious speaking aloud what they've only written. Normalize it: "When you say it aloud, it becomes real in a new way. Your witness will help you see yourself."

If the Witness pair feels awkward or disconnected: "Remember: you're not having a conversation. You're receiving. Listen as though you're trying to understand who this man is beneath the words. Then reflect that back. That's all. The simplicity is the power."

INTEGRATION TIMELINE

This Week (before Cohort 1 Session 5):

1. **Send the updated deck to facilitators** with a note: "We've added three teaching slides that deepen the middle voice principle. They go here: after Slide 5, after Slide 13, after Slide 14."
 2. **Update Facilitator Guide** with the sections above:
 - New section after Slide 5 notes (The Grammar of Both)
 - New section after Slide 13 notes (The Writing Transforms You)
 - New section after Slide 14 notes (Heard Into Becoming)
 3. **Update Participant Guide** with the context boxes:
 - Before Slide 5.5 teaching (Two truths that seem like opposites)
 - Before homework section (The act of writing itself transforms you)
 - Before Slide 14 (What happens when you're heard)
 4. **Brief facilitators on delivery:**
 - These slides are teaching moments, not activities. Men listen; you deliver the talking points.
 - Each takes 4–6 minutes. The pacing fits within the existing session arc.
 - The principle (middle voice) is the anchor. Use your own words if it helps; these talking points are a map, not a script.
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HOW THESE CONNECT TO THE REST OF SESSION 5

Slide	Theme	Connection to Middle Voice
5.5	The Grammar of Both	Sets the principle: both truths are one
9–12	Map It, Mine It	Men are authors of their own narrative
13.5	The Writing Transforms You	Writing is the middle-voice act itself

Slide	Theme	Connection to Middle Voice
14–14.5	The Witness Pair & Heard Into Becoming	Being witnessed is co-creation; men are spoken into becoming
15	The Harvest	What surfaced when you were both author and audience

WHAT MEN SHOULD UNDERSTAND BY END OF SESSION 5

1. **Middle voice is real, not fuzzy theology.** It's an actual grammatical category that held two truths at once in ancient Greek. We don't have it in English, but the principle is still true for how transformation works.
 2. **Agency and surrender are not contradictions.** I write my story (active agency). God has woven it (passive surrender). These happen at the same time (middle voice). Tonight's work demonstrates this.
 3. **The writing and the witnessing are the active ingredients, not the talking about them later.** The pen externalizes. Being heard confirms. Both change you in the moment.
 4. **You're becoming who you were already made to be.** Not inventing yourself. Discovering what God has already authored through your choices, wounds, and turning points.
 5. **The Charter is co-authored.** You write it. God is authoring through it. This is exactly how the second half works — full agency plus full surrender, at the same time.
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NOTES FOR DAVE

- The three new slides follow WhyzMen house style exactly: navy headers, gold accents, cream panels, Georgia serif for titles.
- All body text is 11–12pt for accessibility (men 65+).
- The deck is 23 slides total. Slide numbering reflects the insertion (5.5, 13.5, 14.5) so facilitators know exactly where each goes.
- Each new slide has 4–6 minutes of teaching. Total addition to Session 5: ~15 minutes of teaching spread across the evening (not all at once).

- The principle (middle voice) threads through all three slides and ties back to Particularity and the entire WhyzMen arc. One concept, named once, then reflected back throughout the session and program.

These slides are ready to print and distribute with Session 5 materials. Facilitators will need the talking points (included above) but can work from the deck visually.

File locations:

- **Updated deck:**
[Session_5_CoAuthor_and_Protagonist_r3_with_MiddleVoice.pptx](#) (23 slides)
- **PDF version:**
[Session_5_CoAuthor_and_Protagonist_r3_with_MiddleVoice.pdf](#) (for preview/sharing)
- **This guide:** [Session_5_MiddleVoice_Teaching_Points_and_Integration.md](#)